

REPORT

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SECOND AMENDMENT PRESERVATION

The Subcommittee on Second Amendment Preservation held a public hearing on March 14, 2017, to discuss gun free zones. Representative Chuck Basye served as the chair of the subcommittee. Other members of the subcommittee include Representatives Sonya Anderson, Gary Cross, Tracy McCreery, Peter Merideth, and Rebecca Roeber.

Witnesses encouraged the subcommittee members to remove restrictions on the carrying of concealed weapons in public buildings. Witnesses stressed that the right to bear arms is protected by the United States Constitution and should not be restricted at either the state or local level. Witnesses reminded the subcommittee members that criminals will have guns, regardless of the law. Removing the current carry restrictions will simply allow law abiding citizens to protect themselves from these criminals. It takes time for police officers to respond to the scene of a crime, they can't be relied upon to prevent a crime that is in progress. The best recourse is for individuals to protect themselves. By preventing law abiding citizens from carrying guns we are making them victims. Witnesses testified that criminals actively look for gun free zones in which to carry out their rampages so that their potential victims cannot defend themselves. College students are particularly vulnerable as they are prohibited from carrying guns on campus. Witnesses testified that more rapes, assaults, and burglaries occur on campus; that criminals specifically target individuals on college campuses because they will be unarmed.

At the same time, other witnesses testified that the current restrictions on the carrying of concealed weapons protect the public safety. Enabling more people to carry guns, even law abiding citizens, is not the answer. Not all acts of violence are planned. Alcohol and anger can exacerbate a situation, and if guns are readily available, can lead to death. Witnesses fear that the ready availability of firearms in a college environment, combined with stress and drug and alcohol use could lead to the escalation of fights or suicide attempts. Representatives of professional sports teams testified that they want to reserve the right to prohibit guns in their stadiums. Guns and alcohol are not a safe combination. These teams are very careful to provide security at their stadiums and arenas so that patrons don't need to be concerned about their own safety. Likewise, municipalities are very concerned about the possibility of guns in their courthouses. Witnesses stress that possessing a gun doesn't guarantee that an individual can protect his or herself from an attacker.

House Bill 630 would reduce the number of gun free zones in Missouri. The bill removes the current prohibition against carrying a concealed weapon within twenty-five feet of a polling place on any election day. It also removes the prohibition on carrying into bars, day care, amusement parks, churches, sports arenas or stadiums, hospitals, or onto public buses. Under this bill gun owners could carry concealed weapons into meetings of a governing body of a unit of local government or into a building owned or a

controlled by the general assembly, the Supreme Court of Missouri, or a county or municipality. The bill would also allow a concealed carry permit holder to carry his or her weapon into an institution of higher education or any meeting of the general assembly. House Bill 458 would allow a firearms owner to transport and store firearms in privately owned, locked vehicles in parking garages, lots, and parking spaces. Property owners, tenants, employers, and business entities would be exempt from both civil and criminal liability for any occurrences involving these firearms and the entity could require firearms to be kept in a locked case and hidden from view if stored in a vehicle. However, an owner or employer could still ban employee firearms from vehicles owned or leased by the employer or owner. An employer and business could also ban firearms from certain limited access parking areas if storage areas for firearms are made available to the employee or customer, or if alternative parking areas are provided that are reasonably close to the business or employer. House Bill 630 and House Bill 458 have both been referred to the Committee on General Laws.

The Subcommittee on Second Amendment Preservation recommends that the Committee on General Laws Do Pass HB 630 and HB 458, either by combining the two bills into one House Committee Substitute or by creating a new House Committee Bill containing language substantially similar to, or the same as, HB 630 and HB 458.